

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A steering column assembly comprising:  
a housing having a longitudinal axis,  
a support member supported by said housing for movement about a shift axis,  
a shift lever operatively connected to said support member and extending radially from said shift axis for shifting movement in a limited space, and  
said steering column assembly characterized by a break-away device interconnecting said shift lever and said support member for limiting movement of said shift lever upwardly toward a parallel relationship with said shift axis and for releasing said shift lever for said movement toward said parallel relationship in response to a crash condition.
2. A steering column assembly as set forth in claim 1 wherein said break-away device comprises a fuse responsive to an electrical crash condition signal.
3. A steering column assembly as set forth in claim 2 wherein said break-away device includes a shear container to hold said fuse disposed therein.
4. A steering column assembly as set forth in claim 3 including a translating bracket pivotably connected to said support member and operatively supporting said shift lever.

5. A steering column assembly as set forth in claim 4 wherein said shear container extends through said support member and said translating bracket to present a locking engagement therebetween for limiting movement of said shift lever upwardly toward parallel relationship with said support member.
6. A steering column assembly as set forth in claim 5 comprising:
  - said housing having terminal ends,
  - a flange integral with and extending from said housing to a peripheral edge,
  - a lower housing being pivotably coupled to one of said terminal ends of said housing,
  - a boss of a generally tubular configuration integral with and extending from said peripheral edge,
  - said boss being spaced from and extending parallel to said housing,
  - a cam assembly disposed between said boss and said upper housing,
  - a crank member of said cam assembly including a body having two opposite arms extending therefrom in a cantilevered fashion, one of said arms including a slug for connecting with a wire,
  - a bolt extending through said crank member to said housing pivotally connecting said crank member thereto,
  - an elongated slot defined in said body,
  - a gate member defined in said housing,

a plurality of cells defined in said gate member,  
said support member being disposed within said boss of said housing,  
said support member including a cylindrical portion and a tubular portion,  
said tubular portion of said support member having upper and lower side walls adjacent and parallel one the other and being interconnected by a bottom wall of said tubular portion,

a shifter pin extending perpendicularly through said tubular portion of said support member, said shifter pin having first and second ends,

said first end being further defined by a circular plate having an opening defined therein and said second end including a ball to engage within said slot of said body of said cam assembly,

a screw extending through said opening of said circular plate to said shifter pin to connect said shifter pin to said support member,

a translating bracket disposed within said tubular portion of said support member,

said translating bracket having top and bottom side walls adjacent and parallel one the other and a bottom interconnecting said top and bottom side walls,

a first pivoting pin extending through said upper and top side-walls sandwiched one with the other,

a second pivoting pin extending through said lower and bottom sidewalls sandwiched one with the other,

said shear container extending through said upper and top side walls to

present said locking engagement therebetween for limiting movement of said shift lever upwardly toward parallel relationship with said support member,

said shift lever having a generally cylindrical configuration including terminal ends,

a clevis member attached to one of said terminal ends of said shift lever and being disposed between said top and bottom side walls of said translating bracket, and

a central pin extending through said top side wall, said clevis member and said bottom side wall of said translating bracket for selectively moving said clevis member between said slots of said gate member in different operational modes of said steering column assembly.